

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CPR-02

PM-07 NSC-10 OPR-02 PA-03 RSC-01 SS-15 SY-10 PRS-01

A-01 IO-15 DRC-01 /087 W

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1271

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 7943

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, NI

SUBJECT: GOWON VISIT

REF: STATE 193305

BEGIN SUMMARY: MEA PERMSEC IYALLA SAYS OPTIONS OFFERED REF-TEL UNACCEPTABLE. ONLY HOPE FOR MEETING NOW SEEMS RETURN TO OCTOBER 5 APPOINTMENT IN WASHINGTON. END SUMMARY.

1. AT 11:00 AM GMT SEPTEMBER 29 I MET WITH IYALLA AND AMBASSADOR OLISEMEKA IN MEA TO DISCUSS PROPOSED REVISED MEETING TIME FOR PRESIDENT NIXON AND GENERAL GOWON.

2. IYALLA STATED THAT FMG HAD CAREFULLY CONSIDERED 11:30 AM OCTOBER 4 PROPOSAL AND REGRETFULLY FINDS IT UNACCEPTABLE: (1) GOWON, IN LIGHT OF PHYSIOLOGICAL PROBLEMS DURING RECENT OTTAWA TRIP AND UNDER DOCTOR'S INSTRUCTIONS TO GET MAXIMUM REST BEFORE BEGINNING ANY ACTIVITIES, IS TRAVELING ALL NIGHT FOR FOURTEEN HOURS IN ORDER ARRIVE EARLY OCTOBER 4 IN US. SIMPLY CANNOT UNDERTAKE IMPORTANT DISCUSSIONS AT 11:30 FOLLOWING THE TRAVEL ORDEAL. (2) FOR THE OAU CHAIRMAN TO MEET WITH THE PRESIDENT BEFORE APPEARING AT THE UNGA "WOULD BE LESS THAN A FELICITOUS ARRANGEMENT."

3. OPTION 2 FOR MEETING AT 3:00 PM OCTOBER 5 IN KEY BISCAVNE
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IS, ACCORDING TO IYALLA, "CLEARLY IMPOSSIBLE." PHYSICALLY

IMPOSSIBLE OR GOWON T ADDRESS UNGA AT 11:00 AM, HAVE EVEN BRIEF POST-ADDRESS MEETINGS, GO TO AIRPORT, AND BE IN KEY BISCAYNE AT 3:00 PM. EVEN IF IT WERE POSSIBLE TO MEET THAT TIMING, THE FMG HAS SCHEDULED APPEARANCES FOR GOWON IN NEW YORK LATE AFTERNOON AND EVENING OF SAME DAY, WHICH AT THIS LATE DATE CANNOT BE REARRANGED, ESPECIALLY, IYALLA CONTINUED, AFTER SAME PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS HAD PREVIOUSLY CONSENTED TO ALTER THEIR SCHEDULES SO GOWON COULD MEET WITH PRESIDENT IN WASHINGTON AT 3:00 PM OCTOBER 5.

4. IYALLA PERSONALLY REGRETS AND THE FMG AT ITS HIGHEST LEVEL REGRETS THAT IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR GENERAL GWON TO MEET WITH THE PRESIDENT DURING NEXT WEEK'S VISIT. PERHAPS "AT A MUTUALLY CONVENIENT TIME" THE GENERAL CAN ACCEPT THE OUTSTANDING INVITATION TO MAKE A STATE VISIT, OR PERHAPS PRESIDENT NIXON WILL BE ABLE TO VISIT NIGERIA.

5. CAREFULLY BEARING IN MIND EXACT WORDING FIRST SENTENCE REFTEL ("IF GENERAL GOWON COULD AGREE TO CHANGE APPOINTMENT") AND NOTING THAT I HAD JUST BEEN TOLD THAT GOWON COULD NOT "AGREE" TO CHANGE, I ASKED IYALLA WHETHER ORIGINAL APPOINTMENT COULD BE KEPT IF PRESIDENT FOUND IT POSSIBLE TO ADJUST AN OBVIOUSLY BUSY SCHEDULE. IYALLA REPLIED THAT FMG PROCEEDING UNDER ASSUMPTION THAT PRESIDENT COULD NOT BE IN WASHINGTON AFTERNOON OCTOBER 5, AN ASSUMPTION REINFORCED BY MY OFFER OF OPTION 2. THUS, IF THE ORIGINAL APPOINTMENT WERE OFFERED AGAIN, IYALLA WOULD BE COMPELLED TO TAKE IT ONCE MORE "TO THE HIGHEST LEVEL, GENERAL GOWON AND HIS MILITARY ADVISERS." HE COULD NOT ANTICIPATE THEIR DECISION BUT WOULD RECOMMEND AN AFFIRMATIVE REPLY, WHICH HE WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO SEEK AT ANY TIME BEFORE HE DEPARTS FROM LAGOS FOR NEW YORK EARLY IN THE EVENING OF SEPTEMBER 30.

6. IT WAS MY BEST JUDGMENT NOT TO PRESENT OPTION 3, WHICH WOULD OVERCOME NONE OF THE REASONS IYALLA HAD GIVEN.

7. COMMENT: AFTER INITIAL SLOWNESS IN ANSWERING PRESIDENT'S LETTER OF JULY 31 (UNDOUBTEDLY CAUSED BY SHEER INEFFICIENCY), FMG MOVED WITH UNPRECEDENTED SPEED AND RESPONSIVENESS, ADJUSTING GOWON'S PLANS TO PERMIT MEETING IN WASHINGTON OCTOBER 5
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INSTEAD OF OCTOBER 6 DATE THEY CLEARLY PREFERRED. I REGRET THAT IT HAS NOT BEEN POSSIBLE TO CHANGE APPOINTMENT AS PROPOSED IN REFTEL, BUT I SEE NO EVIDENCE OF OFFICIAL OR PERSONAL ILL WILL OR LACK OF COOPERATION OR INTEREST. ON THE CONTRARY, IYALLA TODAY AND OLISEMEKA YESTERDAY SPRINKLED THROUGHOUT THEIR REMARKS MANY INDICATIONS OF THE SINCERE INTEREST GOWON HAS IN THE MEETING. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCE AND IN VIEW OF MOST UNFORTUNATE IMPRESSIONS THAT WILL RESULT IF NO MEETING POS-

SIBLE (ONE LOCAL NEWSPAPER, USING A UN NEW YORK DATE AND
BYLINE HAS REPORTED THAT GOWON SCHEDULED MEET PRESIDENT),
I HOPE THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO RETURN TO ORIGINAL APPOINT-
MENT, THOUGH I HAVE BEEN CAREFUL NOT TO GIVE LOCAL OFFICIALS
ANY REASON TO ANTICIPATE SAME.
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